

Advisory Council on Aging and Disability Services

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Creating choices for elders and adults with disabilities in Seattle-King County

MONTHLY MEETING

APRIL 21, 2006

MEMBERS PRESENT

CITY OF SEATTLE	KING COUNTY	UNITED WAY
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Thelma Coney	<input type="checkbox"/> Lisa Yeager	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Midge Levy, Secretary
<input type="checkbox"/> Joanne Brekke	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Larry Verhei	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Lorna Stone
<input type="checkbox"/> Adam John	<input type="checkbox"/> John Holecek	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Thelma Pegues, Member-At-Large
<input type="checkbox"/> Alexandra Tu	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> John Barnett	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Timmie Faghin
<input type="checkbox"/> Tom Rasmussen	<input type="checkbox"/> Vacant	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Don Moreland, Chair
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Larry Low	<input type="checkbox"/> Vacant	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Phil Pitruzzello
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Houston Brown, Vice-	<input type="checkbox"/> Vacant	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Michael Miller
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dr. Robert Gross	<input type="checkbox"/> Vacant	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audrey Jernigan
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Candace Inagi	<input type="checkbox"/> Vacant	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Amy Astle-Raaen

Excused Absence Joanne Brekke, Adam John, Tom Rasmussen, John Holecek, Lisa Yeager, Alexandra Tu

Guests Jean Mathisen, Art Mussman, Will Parry, Kate Slaminko, Lee Harned

ADS Staff Pamela Piering, Marcy Kubbs, Linda Wells, Karen Winston, Margaret Casey

United Way Staff

**King County
Staff**

MINUTES

Don Moreland, Chair convened the Advisory Council (AC) meeting at 12:00 p.m. and invited everyone attending to introduce themselves. He complimented Advisory Council members who assisted in the filming of the "Just In Case" emergency preparedness video, Timmie Faghin, John Barnett and Thelma Pegues, noting that Thelma deserves an "Academy Award" for her performance. Don Moreland was also a member of the cast.

PROGRAM : MEDICARE PART D

Jean Mathisen, Senior Rights Assistance and the Statewide Health Insurance Benefits Advisors (SHIBA), and Linda Wells, ADS Planner, discussed the Medicare Part D program including the key points outlined below.

In association with the Area Agency on Aging for Seattle-King County and sponsored by:



City of Seattle



King County

Current Enrollment

Current statistics indicate that statewide 800,000 individuals are eligible for Medicare Part D. In King County reportedly 210,000 individuals are eligible but as of mid-March, only 116,128 have signed up. With just over two weeks away to the end of the enrollment period, Jean is concerned about the 90,000 yet to be enrolled. In November, 2005, SHIBA had been sending out 400 packets of information on Medicare Part D a day, but that number has dwindled to 156 packets. She is unsure if the remaining 90,000 are not planning to enroll, or whether they will wait to the last minute to do so. As of next week SHIBA will have a recording on their phones directing callers to phone Medicare directly at 1-800-MEDICARE (800-633-4227). Individuals can also contact their website at: www.medicare.gov to sign up.

While the federal government is unlikely to extend the deadline, Linda Wells did mention that a certain group of people with a low income subsidy will have an extension. Will Parry reported 48 US Senators have introduced legislation to eliminate the 1% penalty for not enrolling by the May 15th deadline.

What is Working?

Several people reported having a good experience enrolling themselves or others in the program. While at first it can seem like “information overload”, studying information on the website or calling Medicare to work with the experts is helpful.

Jean shared the story of one woman for whom her medications were life-saving. The monthly cost of those prescriptions however was \$19,000. With Jean’s help she was able to enroll in a plan that covered the prescriptions. The woman’s co-pay is only \$60 a month. While this is certainly a success story, Jean acknowledged the woman will have a problem when she hits the “doughnut hole” and she must cover 100% of the costs of her prescriptions.

When participants have reached a total of \$2,250 in prescription costs, their co-pay plus the costs to Medicare, they have reached the “doughnut hole”. They are then responsible for 100% of their prescription costs until January 1 of the following year, or until their prescription costs total \$5,100 when Catastrophic Coverage kicks in. Jean fears some individuals may stop taking their medications until the following year because they cannot afford to pay the full costs of their medications.

How Does This Relate to ADS?

Linda Wells reported that the “D Team” was formed to work with ADS case-managed clients to assist them in signing up for Medicare Part D. The team consists of two volunteers and some ADS staff. Considering there are 6,000 case-managed clients, it was anticipated that potentially a large number of clients would need assistance. As it turned out, only 30 clients needed D Team assistance, and of those, only three were life-threatening situations. One of the most challenging situations was enrolling a client for whom the team had to make 13 phone calls

before being able to finalize their enrollment. Pam added that most clients had been auto-enrolled while many figured out how to enroll on their own.

ADS has also been a part of the Access to Benefits Coalition (ABC), a National Council on Aging (NCOA) funded initiative to assist individuals in signing up for benefits. Since November 2005, the coalition has provided 185 outreach and education trainings attended by over 13,000 individuals and provided individual counseling to 2,180 individuals. The coalition will continue to meet despite the fact there will be little if any funding for their work.

What Problems Have Been Experienced?

Pharmacists have reported considerable difficulty with the program, and many are having trouble staying afloat due to cash flow problems. A pharmacist in Kent, for example, is going out of business. The customer pays the co-pay and the pharmacy then bills Medicare for the remainder. Some report having difficulties getting reimbursed while others indicate the program is sometimes so restrictive that it is not worth participating. Also, instructions are not transparent and it can be difficult to figure out reimbursement procedures or how much money they will receive. Some of the auto-enrolled participants have found better plans and switched. Delayed paperwork can cause confusion if the client fills a prescription before that new information is available to the pharmacy. Jean noted the irony of some pharmacies going out of business, while it is estimated pharmaceutical companies will earn gross profit of \$12.5 Billion.

In addition, some clients don't want to enroll as they have been receiving free samples from their physicians. Others have been using a pharmacy discount card. While it had appeared that discounted drug programs from pharmaceutical companies would be discontinued, there are reports that Glaxco Smith Klein, for example, will continue their program.

Also, due to the competitive nature of the program, not all plans will survive. The list of available plans will be smaller next year.

What's Next?

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) does not want to be in a position where people have missed the deadline to sign up. Once they have missed the deadline, a penalty of 1% per month through the end of the year (7 months) will be added to the premium of the plan they select during open enrollment in January, 2007. Using the average premium rate of \$32 a month, a 7% penalty would result in \$2.20 extra being paid each month.

Due to fears that SHIBA could be overloaded in the last few weeks, an outgoing message will start to refer individuals to Medicare. Tips for reducing the amount of time you are on hold are to say "agent" or press "0" repeatedly.

Pamela Piering reported that signing individuals up for Medicare Part D has taken a "huge toll on services". Adequate funding has not been available to Information and Assistance for these activities. The state Aging and Disability Services Administration (ADSA), however, has asked

ADS to quantify the costs of its efforts as it may be able to at least partially reimburse ADS. Also, n4a has developed a policy position requesting \$41 million (\$1 for every beneficiary) be made available to provide service in the future related to the program.

BUSINESS MEETING

Minutes

Action Taken: It was moved/seconded and passed that the March 10, 2006 minutes be approved once corrected. The motion under “Retreat Small Group Discussions” was amended to read: “It was moved / seconded and passed that the Executive Committee study the retreat recommendations and propose those that can be incorporated into an Advisory Council work plan *by the April meeting*”. (correction in italics)

COMMITTEE AND TASK FORCE REPORTS

Sponsor’s Meeting

Pamela Piering was asked to report on the Sponsors’ meeting. She indicated the Sponsors visited ElderHealth Northwest’s Columbia City site for their April meeting. They toured their adult day center facility and adjacent supported living home, Buchanan Place, learning about the services offered. The Sponsors’ response was positive and other tours may be arranged for them.

Outreach & Advocacy Committee / Health Care Task Force

Officers of the committee and task force reported on several items.

1) Seattle Indian Health Board (SIHB)

SIHB director, Ralph Forquera, shared information on the services and challenges facing their agency. They are planning a new adult day health program. He advised the members that \$32.7 Million in funding for urban Native Americans is in danger of being removed from the federal budget. This funding is critical for urban Native Americans. Mr. Forquera would welcome letters being written to Washington’s Congressional Delegation in support of retaining this funding in the budget.

2) Accessible Technology Advocacy Alert

Michael Miller reported that historic funding for assistive technology is in danger of being eliminated from the House budget. There currently is no funding in the Senate budget to support Protection and Advocacy Program Assistive Technology (PAAT) or Title III loan programs. This funding supports the Washington Assistive Technology Association that provides micro loans to individuals to purchase hearing aids or other assistive devices. Michael requested the Advisory Council write letters to Washington’s Congressional Delegation to support funding for the Assistive Technology Act in the Appropriations bills.

Action: It was moved / seconded and passed that the Advisory Council send letters to our Senators and Representatives requesting funds for the Assistive Technology Act be included in the FY 2007 Appropriations bills.

3) Legislative Forum

Timmie Faghin reported that the forum will take place at Seattle Center on August 23, 2006. The theme will be “Supporting Vulnerable Adults” and will have a federal and state focus.

Communications Committee

Timmie Faghin reported that readership for the Seniors Digest continues to grow and the model is being copied around the country. She asked for suggestions of individuals to be featured in future issues. Since the e-magazine is sponsored by Aging and Disability Services, Michael Miller requested that “Disability” be added in the title and that articles on that topic be included in future issues.

Timmie reported that she and Don Moreland attended the March 30, 2006 Public Hearing on Comcast Cable service at Seattle Center. Don testified at the well attended hearing. He requested discounts for seniors and adult with disabilities and, though not a part of Comcast’s current contract with the City, discounts for internet service.

State Council on Aging

There was no report on the State Council on Aging.

Universal Design Coalition (UD)

Margaret Casey, ADS staff provided a quarterly report on activities of the Universal Design Coalition. She reminded the council that the coalition grew out of the Housing Task Force. Since ADS doesn’t fund or manage housing it seemed logical for the agency to help people plan so they can age in place. The broad focus is on the built environment.

Dr. Sandra Hartje, Professor at Seattle Pacific University (SPU) was the first in the nation to research what elements are essential to Universal Design. Her research report was presented to Don Moreland at a recent meeting. The next step will be the development of a research-based checklist. Margaret did share with members a booklet, “Universal Home Design”, which includes a practical guide to UD elements for the home.

The coalition has also been trying to support development of a demonstration center to train and educate the public about universal design. SPU is the first university in the country to require a course in UD for its Interior Design students. A DVD will soon be completed documenting their work with a developer on a single family residence in Tukwila last year. This year students in the UD course will work with Quadrant on incorporating UD in housing.

The Aging In Place (AIP) Resource Fair will have a different format this year. Organizers of the Seattle Home Show are excited about the possibility of incorporating Universal Design in their shows. Plans are to have a prominent UD track including UD vendors, products and designs. The coalition will have a booth at the October Home Show and a more involved display at the February Home Show.

Other coalition activities include field trips such as a recent one to Genesee Apartments, part of Hope VI housing in the county. Also, coalition members Emory Baldwin & Shirley Tomito are

working on a special interactive project, Co-Incide: Housing in Response to the Human Lifespan.

Planning and Allocation Committee

Lorna Stone reported that the committee heard a presentation by the Mayor's Office for Senior Citizens (MOSC). Information was provided on the Age 55+ Employment Resource Center and Title V employment program. Currently 245 individuals are on a waiting list for placement in one of the community employment positions. Councilmember Tom Rasmussen has assisted in acquiring a one-time-only appropriation of \$75,000 to reduce the waitlist. Of great concern is the Department of Labor proposal to make major changes to the Title V Senior Community Service Employment Program and the President's 2007 budget proposal that reduces funding by \$44 million. They ask that the Outreach & Advocacy Committee consider taking action on this issue.

NEW BUSINESS

John Barnett reported on an article in the Seattle Times-P.I., "Medicaid Eligibility Gets Tough". While in the past states could use discretion in obtaining documentation from individuals, effective July 1st, states will be required to obtain proper documentation. He wondered what effect this might have on ADS Medicaid clients and whether there are Medicaid eligible clients in the county that might not be able to produce proper documentation. He wondered if education on this topic would be helpful.

Pam Piering indicated that historically the state has operated on a "self-declaration" mode which has been helpful since there are over 2,000 limited-English speaking eligible clients in the county. While exact numbers are not available, ADS will try to use the least onerous approach, perhaps phasing in the new requirements at the time of client's one-year assessment. She acknowledged it is a significant issue, but with an effective date of July 1 there is time to strategize an appropriate response.

Don Moreland questioned whether there is adequate time allotted to meetings to cover all the necessary business. He requested the topic of extending the Advisory Council meetings one-half hour be added to next month's agenda.

Director's Report

Pamela Piering reported on a number of items to the Advisory Council.

1) Pam and Don Moreland recently met with Congressman McDermott to discuss a variety of topics including the Older American's Act (OAA), Title V, and Medicaid documentation. Representative McDermott shared that Congress is very polarized and Republicans and Democrats are not communicating with each other. There have been times when he has voted against a bill because he hasn't seen it and there has been no hearing. He believes democracy is damaged when there is no airing of the issues.

2) Pam will be at an n4a meeting the first week of May. Topics will include the Center for Budget & Priorities, OAA technical and funding concerns, Medicare Part D, and Medicaid.

3) Kinship Care – The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Children’s program will pass through some funding to ADS for collaboration on how to provide the best service. The focus of this funding will be on serving grandchildren and the caregiver.

4) ADS Relationship with Institutes of Higher Learning – Pam noted the relationship ADS has with both SPU with regard to the Universal Design research being conducted by Dr. Hartje, and the University of Washington whose graduate and doctoral students have worked with ADS.

5) ADS Unit Rate Cut – Pam indicated she may seek Advisory Council’s advice as she has learned that Aging & Disability Services Administration (ADSA) will reduce its allocation to ADS by \$150,000 due to the impact of a new pilot project.

Lastly, Pam announced the departure of a treasured member of the ADS staff, Linda Wells. While she expressed her sadness, she indicated the good news is that Linda has accepted a position at King County where she will be the Program Manager of King County’s Aging Program. Pam thanked Linda for her wonderful work on behalf of ADS and its clients over the eight years she served with ADS. Linda expressed her thanks to the Advisory Council, ADS management and staff for their support. Don Moreland and Timmie Faghin presented flowers and a gift to Linda.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:00 p.m.

NEXT REGULAR MEETING

Friday, May 12, 2006

12:00 – 2:00 p.m.

13th Floor Conference Room

Alaska Building

618 Second Ave, Seattle, WA 98104

www.adsadvisorycouncil.org

Don Moreland, Chair _____